DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 366 105 EA 025 615

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TITLE System Level Support for School Effectiveness.
INSTITUTION Diocese of Parramatta, New South Wales (Australia). Catholic Education Office.
PUB DATE Jan 94
NOTE 22p.; Paper prepared for the Annual Meeting of the International Congress for School Effectiveness and Improvement (7th, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, January 1994).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Administrator Evaluation; *Catholic Schools; Effective Schools Research; Elementary Secondary Education; Foreign Countries; *Organizational Development; *Professional Development; *School Effectiveness; Teacher Supervision
IDENTIFIERS *Australia

ABSTRACT

This paper describes the efforts of a private Australian school system to implement practices that facilitate system-wide school effectiveness. The Diocese of Parramatta, a system of 73 primary and secondary Catholic schools, implemented system-level practices that embody elements of Fullan's (1987) notions of support and pressure. The implementation and relationship of five school-development practices are described: school development processes, principal appraisal, professional development for principals, professional development for teachers, and teacher supervision. Pressure is present in the school-development and appraisal processes, and support exists in the form of teacher and professional development, supervision, and provision of consultancy and resources. A systemic framework for school effectiveness has been developed, based on commonly accepted wisdom about the role of the principal, the significance of professional development, and the interdependence of school development, appraisal, and professional development. (LMI)

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SYSTEM LEVEL SUPPORT FOR SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS

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A paper presented at the 7th International Congress for School Effectiveness and Improvement,
Melbourne, January 1994

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In an educational climate where there is a strong emphasis on outcomes, it is seductively easy for systems to presume that simply requiring a particular outcome of schools, teachers or students is enough to ensure its achievement. In a world pervaded by the language of quality assurance, efficiency, economic rationalism and accountability, the nomination of school effectiveness as an outcome worth pursuing requires little justification. However, the premise of this paper is that it is necessary for decision makers to attend not only to the specification of required outcomes (such as school effectiveness), but to the provision of mechanisms which will support - not simply monitor - those outcomes.

A great deal of attention has been given in recent times in NSW to issues of quality assurance, often with a public image which has been clearly tailored to meet the demands of the accountability lobby. In addressing the promotion of school effectiveness, schools and systems are confronted by the need to balance the dual concerns of fostering growth and development while meeting increased demands for accountability in the context of devolved educational systems.

This paper explores elements of an attempt to balance these competing priorities made in the Diocese of Parramatta - a system of some 73 primary and secondary Catholic schools. The Catholic Education Office (CEO) in the Diocese has a strong commitment to school effectiveness and has devoted significant time and resources to the development of policies and procedures to

support initiatives in this area. These include both formal and informal practices in the areas of system-wide support for school development, principal appraisal and teacher supervision, and teacher and principal professional development. In some cases structures were established which built on a prior understanding of the interdependence of two practices (such as appraisal of principals and professional development of principals). In other instances, the relationships between practices have only emerged in practice, as was the case with principal appraisal and school development. This paper describes how one system is attempting to adopt practices which facilitate and enhance school effectiveness, and traces the developing understanding of relationships amongst these practices.

The literature is replete with reminders of the central role of the principal (Beare, Caldwell and Milliken, 1989 and Fullan, 1991) and of the crucial function of ongoing professional development (Fullan, 1991, Fullan and Hargreaves, 1992 and Bradley, 1991). Fullan, Bennett and Rolheiser-Bennett (1990) argue that classroom improvement, teacher development and school improvement must be linked if substantial progress is to be achieved. Further, authors like Bradley (1991) have made explicit the interdependence of practices in professional development, school development and appraisal. In the process of designing and implementing the policies and procedures which support school effectiveness in Parramatta there has been a growth in understanding of the inter-relationships among not only Bradley' (1991) school and teacher focussed elements, but among these and principal appraisal and development. The latter two areas of practice are given additional attention in this paper, both because of the comparative recency of their review in Parramatta and because their consideration along with school development, teacher professional development and supervision of teachers helps to consolidate a number of areas which have generally been considered in isolation to date.

PRACTICES WHICH SUPPORT SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS INITIATIVES

The practices which are in place in Parramatta to enhance school effectiveness include some which are responses to formal policy, and others which are more aptly described as emergent practice. In the former category are professional development (for teachers and principals), executive appraisal and formal requirements for school development. In the midst of activities in this area at system level, there emerged in schools (particularly primary schools) a growing awareness of the benefits of supervision for classroom teachers. This is finding expression in formal and informal programs of supervision in many schools. While there is no system policy in this area, it is seen as having significant capacity to enhance school effectiveness. Each of the five practices is described below in terms of the way in which it was shaped, how it is being implemented, with some reference to its interrelationship with other practices. A more detailed overview of relationships follows in a subsequent section.

1. School Development Processes

In 1992 the CEO established a working party to address three issues - principal appraisal, school development and registration of schools (a legislative requirement of NSW schools). From the outset there was a clear understanding of the interdependence of these practices , and this shaped the group's deliberations. The working party, comprising principals and senior system personnel produced draft procedures for each of the three areas of its inquiry which captured the relationships between them while recognising their fundamental independence. The procedures which emerged as recommendations were revised after broader consultation and now have the status of working documents which will be further refined in practice. Current practice in school development is described below.

School development processes are perhaps the structures most explicitly linked to school effectiveness. In Parramatta, school development is understood to be "a strategic attempt by a school community to enhance performance in teaching and learning as a part of the overall mission of a Catholic school" (CEO, 1993b,p.1). It is also seen as a significant means of demonstrating accountability to the school community

School development is seen as a strategy which integrates key elements of shared vision, evaluation, community involvement and commitment to planning for the effective implementation of change. While it has been recognised that all schools are continuously engaged in processes of renewal, there is a system requirement that all schools will engage in a formal school development program, involving the community and the Area Administrator, each four to six years. The Area Administrator is a system representative with oversight of a number of schools.

A full school development program is understood to comprise four major processes, all of which need to be undertaken, but in the order which best suits the school: planning the program, evaluating the current situation, developing a plan for action and implementing the plan. Aside from the assistance of the Area Administrator, schools can call on the assistance of Education Officers with expertise in the area of school development to facilitate the processes involved. The Education Officers are able to draw on experiences in a range of schools, and to help schools decide on appropriate strategies for their circumstances. A number of school and CEO staff also provide a range of professional development activities which can provide participants with skills to support school development processes. These are discussed in more detail elsewhere in this paper. A further form of support for school development comes in the form of release days which are allocated to each school and to the Area Administrator. These constitute an invaluable resource as

school communities work to find the time for consultation, consolidation of findings and strategic planning.

In addition to these forms of support, schools are encouraged to invite members from within and beyond the school community with relevant expertise to form a Review Panel. This year panels have included curriculum experts, academics and specialist personnel from the CEO as people who have made contributions, particularly in the process of evaluating the current situation.

It is seen as appropriate that schools address registration requirements as part of a program of school development rather than as a further and separate task to be undertaken. In some instances, personnel from the NSW Board of Studies will be invited to be members of the Review Panel as a means of allowing the Board to assess system procedures for monitoring schools . This model has been successfully used already this year, with positive feedback from Board Inspectors as to the appropriateness of the processes utilised.

School development is a major element of the Principal's accountabilities, and as such forms a significant item of the appraisal agenda.

2. *Principal Appraisal*

Principal appraisal is seen as "an essential mechanism for ensuring accountability to the system, and for the professional development of an individual" (Catholic Education Office, 1993a, p.1). Principal appraisal has two essential elements (CEO, 1993a) : ongoing appraisal and summative appraisal. The procedures for appraisal place very high value on the self appraisal of the principal as a means of ensuring critical reflection on practice. This is complemented by discerning feedback from the Area Administrator. The interaction of the two viewpoints provides a

sound basis for the generation of action plans for performance and professional development.

The ongoing appraisal is fundamentally a process of setting long and short term goals and monitoring their achievement. This is based on principal self appraisal, negotiated with the Area Administrator within the parameters of the role statement. The process and its outcomes are recorded in a brief report which is completed annually. The model places very high priority on the significance of the insights of the principal, and his or her own responsibility for reflective practice.

The summative appraisal is a broader-based process which takes place at least once in the term of any contract. It draws both on the data from ongoing appraisal and on information gathered from a range of school community members. A formal report is one of the products of the summative appraisal.

The consultation with Principals over the appraisal process revealed a number of anxieties, particularly since the new approach constituted a shift to a one-to-one model from one in which appraisal was a summative activity running over a three day block and conducted by a panel made up of the Area Administrator and a group of peer principals. The significance of appropriate professional development for principals was demonstrated when the anxieties about appraisal were considerably allayed by the provision of a skills based coaching for principals, Area Administrators and assistant principals. The fact that activity was run by a highly regarded outside consultant was a key reason for its success. Approximately half of the eligible participants completed the program in 1993, with the remainder scheduled to participate in 1994.

3. Principal Professional Development

As a consequence of, among other factors, the changed practice in school development and appraisal treated above, it was realised that the provision of principal professional development would need to be fundamentally re-assessed in order to provide the necessary level of support to ensure the effectiveness of schools. This review became a major priority of the CEO during 1993.

A Task Force comprising system personnel, principals and an academic was established with the following terms of reference (CEO, 1993c: p.3):

- *To review current practice in principal professional development in the Diocese;*
- *To identify models of good practice;*
- *To identify the needs and preferences of principals;*
- *To identify system level expectations with regard to principal professional development;*
- *To make recommendations regarding the content and mode of delivery of principal professional development in the Diocese of Parramatta.*

The Task Force decided to base any recommendations on a consideration of three major sources of data: the literature and models of good practice, principal practices and expressed needs, and Diocesan criteria for the selection of principals.

Turning firstly to the literature and models of good practice, a key finding is the importance of rooting professional development in reflection on practice and focussing it on change. Fullan stresses that inservice programs are of little value if they do not lead to change in the principal's work practice (1991). Keane (1991)

suggests that the answer to effecting change and institutional improvement is more likely to be found if leadership formation programs assist principals to examine their attitudes towards helping people, assist them to learn more effectively from their experience on the job, and assist them to critically examine the meanings they attribute to these experiences. Principals have rich opportunities to increase their leadership effectiveness on *task* by learning more consciously and systematically from day-to-day experience. (France,1986). Murphy and Hallinger (1992) draw attention to the significance of problem-based learning because it integrates the content of a principal's role (eg. legal issues, instructional supervision, staff development) with the management processes that lead to the development of the role (eg. communication, problem-solving, decision-making.) .

Support and partnership in planning and implementation of professional development have also been widely advocated. For example, Fullan and Stiegelbauer (1991) identify one of the factors in successful reform as professional development structures which are sustained and collegial. MacPherson and Caldwell, 1992) identify useful forms of follow up as coaching, on-site technical assistance or support groups. McLaughlin (1990) recommended that delivery systems for leadership education should be planned jointly by key stakeholders including principals, system administrators and accrediting institutions.

The literature review identified a range of delivery models with merit in principal professional development. These included mentoring , contract coaching, system-wide short-term programs , and principals' forums .

Reflection on the literature by the members of the Task Force led to a statement of the following as principles to be manifest in any attempt to facilitate inservice delivery for principals.

- There is no single best approach to principal professional development

- Principal professional development:

  - actively supports the Diocesan view of Principal leadership
  - is a responsibility shared by the principal and the system with the Area Administrator playing a key role through the appraisal process
  - is built upon praxis and reflection
  - requires appropriate motivation
  - takes place largely in the context of the school
  - will be most successful in a collaborative learning culture
  - will require appropriate resources
  - is not always amenable to credentialling

  (CEO, 1993c, p.7)

A critical element of the Task Force's work was providing a profile of existing principal professional development practices, and of perceived needs and preferences. A survey allowed the task force to make a series of generalisations about the cohort of principals in the Diocese (CEO, 1993c). In general, they are very experienced and well qualified, but there is a significant range on all basic indicators.

The most frequently mentioned focuses of professional development activities participated in during the eighteen months prior to the survey in mid 1993 were leadership in general, appraisal and supervision, and school development. Reading had a similar focus. Principals' conferences were the most frequently mentioned form of professional development activity, indicating a strong preference for networking with peers. Principals also identified as significant a range of activities such as committee or panel membership, sharing with other principals and learning from experiences such as school development activities, revealing a preference for practically grounded, collegial activities. When asked to indicate which forms of professional development they had found most valuable, principals identified both appraisal workshops and participation

in their own appraisal as significant, as well as interaction with peers.

When asked to identify areas of need for 1994 and beyond, issues related to change and curriculum were clearly seen as the greatest area of need, followed by the whole issue of leadership. Principals suggested a wide range of approaches to "packaging" professional development. The strongest suggestions related to using extended withdrawal (anything from 2 days to a term) as opposed to (say) half day sessions, and to the use of weekends or vacation time.

Differences between sub-groups of principals were calculated using t-tests for major indicators (multivariate analysis was precluded by the small sample size, so results should be interpreted with caution). General trends only are reported here. A full report of results may be found in CEO (1993c).

There was an overall pattern of women attending a greater number of inservices and their being of longer duration. Lay principals attended more inservices, spent more time at them and belonged to more associations than religious. Two thirds of those principals who did not belong to any association were religious, and religious tended to be more experienced than their lay counterparts. The overall pattern of differences between Primary and Secondary principals revealed greater experience, greater participation in all kinds of inservice and a tendency to participate in longer inservices on the part of primary principals.

These findings, added to the information provided by the review of the literature and the criteria for principal selection published by the Diocesan Schools Board in 1993 formed the basis of the proposals for principal professional development in the Diocese of Parramatta. The type of professional development needed by principals was characterised as "flexible, sensitive to career stages,

individualised, reflective and collaborative" (CEO, 1993c. p.24). The recommendations made have been accepted by principals and approved (with necessary resources in place) for implementation in 1994 and beyond.

In summary, the recommendations of the task force were that professional development activities be structured in three stages : pre-appointment , induction, and ongoing development of individuals and executive teams. The appraisal processes for assistant principals and principals are seen as central to ensuring that leaders in the system are supported and advised in making choices among the opportunities available, and the role of the Area Administrator is central in this process.

Because the system has recently adopted a series of criteria for the selection of principals (CEO, 1993c, p. 21) the pre-appointment program has been conceived so as to provide participants with opportunities to take part in professional development activities accredited by the Australian Catholic University (ACU) which address the basic skills and understandings described by the criteria. Participants will have access to a selection of courses from the ACU Masters Degree in Educational Administration. These will be offered in the Diocese rather than on campus over a three year cycle in a mixed mode, reducing travel demands on participants. A prior program known as the Executive Development Program and reported in *Leaders and their learning* (DEET, 1993) proved the appeal of this mode of offering.

The induction process of a new principal will be negotiated with the Area Administrator and supported by a group of volunteer experienced principals. This may well result in a group of inductee-mentor relationships across the diocese, with support groups emerging also among the beginning principals. Details of this process are still to be negotiated.

Aside from the elements of the system level professional development program with a specific focus on educational leadership (CEO, 1993d) the ongoing development of experienced principals will be supported by resourcing self directed learning groups. Funds will be available on a submission basis. It is hoped that this highly flexible structure will allow principals to engage in an ongoing exploration of areas that are relevant to them in an environment of collegial support. One of the major challenges of implementation will be to get the self directed learning groups operational while ensuring real principal ownership of the groups and their agendas.

4. Teacher professional development

The working party on school development, appraisal and registration indicated in a number of places in their final report (CEO, 1992) that the introduction of new procedures for school development and for principal appraisal would only be successful if participants were skilled appropriately. To simplify the consideration of the role of teacher professional development, it will be considered from the point of view of its capacity to support school development.

In this case, the working party was aware that there were already in place among the system's annual professional development offerings of over 300 activities for its approximately 2,500 teachers, a number of activities for teachers and administrators which would contribute to school development. A review revealed a need for additional programs as well as a reconsideration of the balance between consultancy and inservice support.

Clearly, implementation of a school development process in a school generates a series of needs for professional development. Each school proceeds in a unique way and hence generates different needs. In the best of all possible worlds, each school would have access to individual consultancy support which

would be able to address all of these needs if and when they arose. In reality, however, this was not viable with limited resources and personnel.

As a system there is an imperative to respond to the needs of schools for support in school development in ways which maximise the available resources. This implies delivering professional development support to the broadest group of clients at any given time, while ensuring meaningful learning and opportunity for reflection on practice. In some instances the only approach which meets these criteria is school based, but in many, a system level , or cluster approach is very effective.

In considering the existing annual program of professional development it was apparent that there were some activities which would directly and explicitly support school development. An example of this was work on strategic planning. In fact activities to address this issue had to be specially written and added to the program. On the other hand, there were many other activities already in the program which could contribute to school development without necessarily even addressing it explicitly (for example, evaluation procedures). Taking this analysis a step further, there were some activities in the program which could address the needs of individual schools emerging out of the development process, without contributing to the process itself. As a consequence of this type of analysis, professional development for school development activities is now clearly articulated with the broader program both in terms of content and administration. This can be represented in the diagram below:

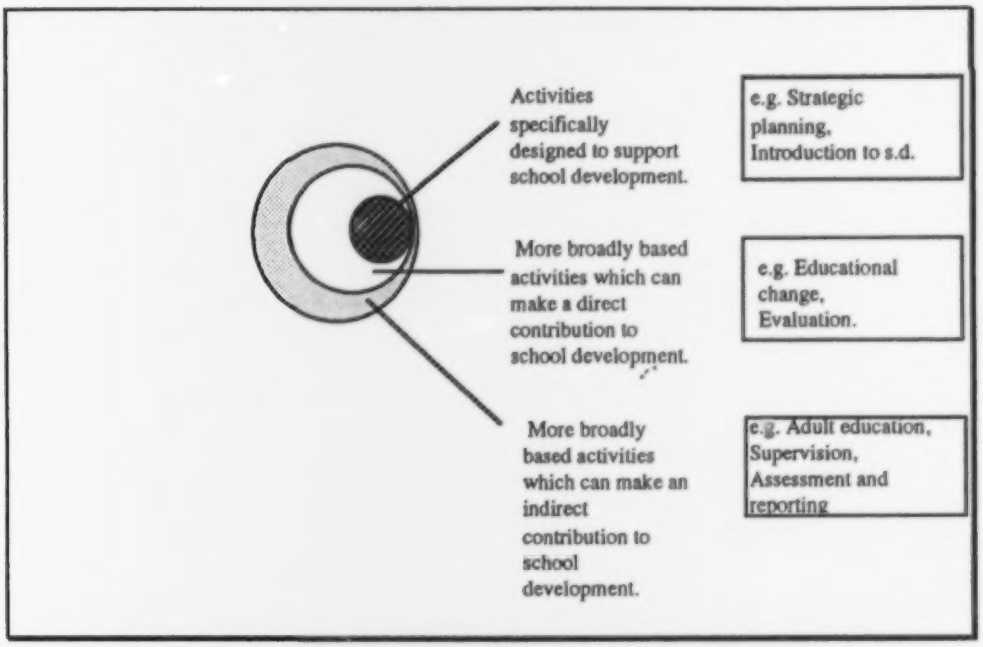
Activities specifically designed to support school development.
e.g. Strategic planning, Introduction to s.d.
More broadly based activities which can make a direct contribution to school development.
e.g. Educational change, Evaluation.
More broadly based activities which can make an indirect contribution to school development.
e.g. Adult education, Supervision, Assessment and reporting

Figure 1: Professional Development in Support of School Development

For the last two years, particular activities to support school development have been highlighted in the published program both by explicit labelling and by a comprehensive system of cross indexing. In 1994 it is anticipated that this will be taken a step further by drawing these together in a separate leaflet which will be available to schools embarking on a school development process. The brochure will be a more precise means of identifying the contributions which might be made by professional development activities available during the year. Activities designed specifically to support Diocesan school development practices include: *An introduction to the school development process* , a series of four workshops related to strategic planning and a newly established school development network to allow practitioners to share their experiences. Activities which will contribute in significant ways to school development include *Managing change while staying sane, Making meetings better, Building the leadership team,* and *Evaluation and review: Looking back to move forward.* Other activities which might contribute indirectly cover topics as diverse as adult education,

supervision, and assessment and reporting. A number of these activities can be presented for academic credit at Australian Catholic University if assessment tasks are completed.

5. Teacher Supervision

As individual schools in the Diocese have begun to look critically at their own professional development and school development practices, a number (predominantly Primary schools) have come to the awareness that supervision practices can enhance the quality of teaching and learning in the school, and hence contribute to overall school effectiveness.

Some schools have written a supervision policy into their staff development policy. Others have implemented the practice less formally as a form of teacher support. The CEO has no policy on teacher supervision, but has responded to what is becoming widespread practice by providing professional development in supervision. This has been attended by over a hundred participants in the last two years.

As was the case with executive appraisal, one of the significant learnings from offering this type of program was an awareness of the level of anxiety around the process of supervision, and the extent to which this is related to either lack of clarity or misapprehension about the nature of supervision. Once participants see supervision in the context of professional growth and the overall mission of the school, they are much more at ease with the notion, and feel freer to explore the skills needed both to be supervised, to act as a supervisor themselves and to move to refine practices in this area in their schools. Participants are asked to register in the professional development activity with a colleague from the same school so as to maximise the possibility of supporting one another on return to the school.

RELATIONSHIPS AMONG ELEMENTS WHICH SUPPORT SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS

The descriptions above have highlighted some of the connections among the five key elements . School development, principal and teacher professional development, principal appraisal and teacher supervision are mutually interdependent, with each supporting the others, while at the same time helping to shape them. Figure 2 below elaborates this diagrammatically:

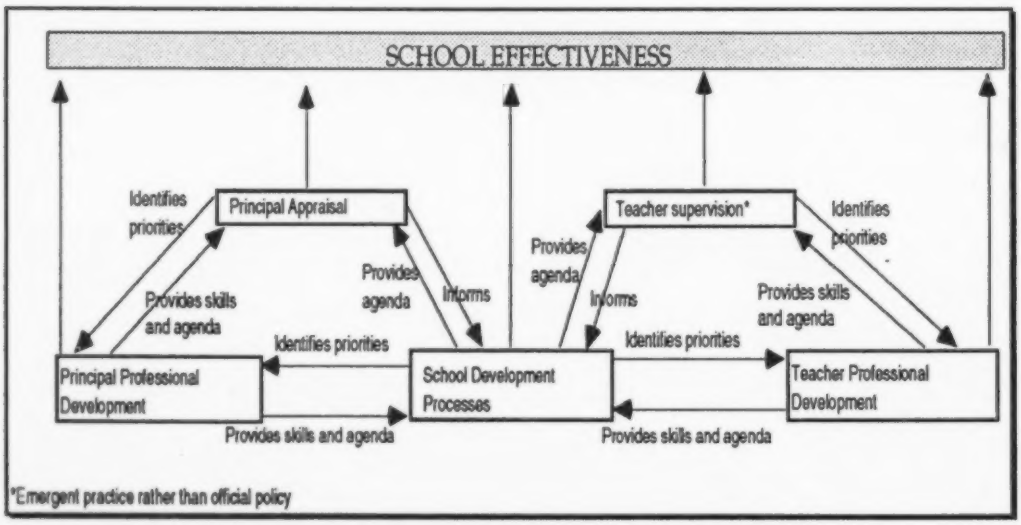

Figure 2: Relationships among elements supporting school effectiveness

A couple of examples of the inter-relatedness of elements will help to flesh out the model. The first relates to the new appraisal policy.

As a consequence of the decision to implement the appraisal policy, all principals and senior system personnel will have received training in appraisal during 1993/1994. This directly enhances their ability to participate in appraisal. This same inservice activity provides agenda for appraisal as principals discuss with their Area Administrators the ways in which they have carried out appraisal of their assistant principals. The

successful implementation of appraisal practices can, in turn, make a significant contribution to school development. Among the outcomes of the process mentioned in system guidelines are the identification of priorities for action in the principal's professional development, and the provision of information for school development programs (CEO, 1993a: 2).

The second example traces the impact of embarking on a school development program. The principal is the person responsible for this, so as a consequence , his/her actions in this regard will comprise part of the agenda of appraisal. From another perspective, school development requires the appropriate involvement of all groups within the school community - which places demands on teachers in particular. The implementation process requires the establishment of "structures which support the necessary action, including ..... professional development" (CEO, 1993b:5). This professional development could be for teachers, parents or the principal.

CONCLUSION

This paper has described the efforts of one school system to facilitate the pursuit of school effectiveness (an essentially school based endeavour) through the implementation of system level practices - practices which embody elements of Fullan's (1987) notions of support and pressure. In his paper to the Australian Curriculum Studies Association at Macquarie University he reminded his audience that pressure without support can lead to alienation, while support without pressure can lead to wasted resources. Pressure is present in Parramatta in the policies which require that schools participate in development processes and that principals participate in appraisal procedures. Support exists in the form of teacher and principal professional development, and the provision of consultancy and other resources to schools. The result of this simultaneous presence of expectation and appropriate support mechanisms is that schools are embarking

successfully on school development programs, principals are engaging as both appraiser and appraisee) in well founded appraisal procedures, and, quite outside any policy framework, schools and teachers are actively seeking opportunities for supportive supervision These practices, singly and in combination, are regarded as pivotal to school effectiveness. This can be represented as in Figure 3, below.

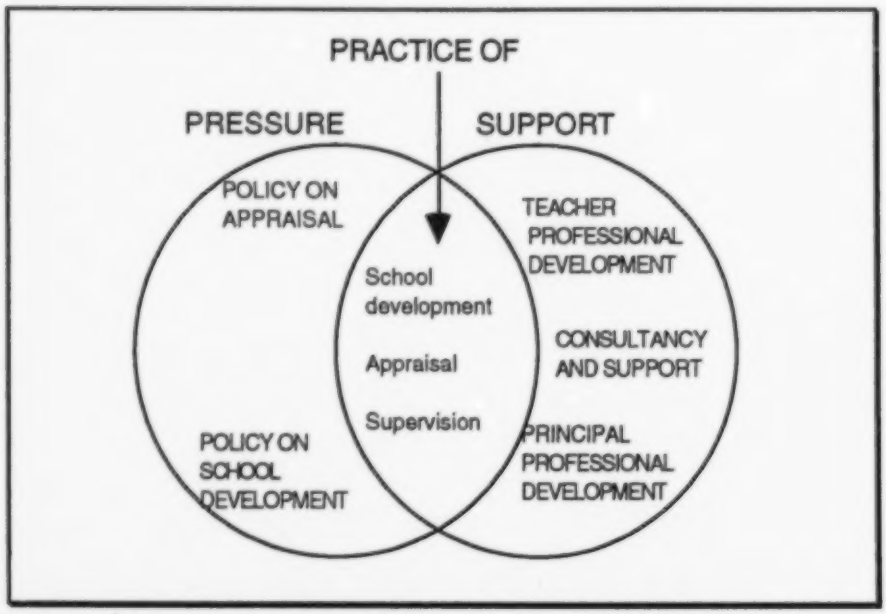

Figure 3: Pressure and support in school effectiveness

What is emerging in the Catholic schools' system in the Diocese of Parramatta is a series of processes which recognises the importance of developmental issues as well as accountability issues. There is scope for local ownership, with plenty of opportunity for choice. There has not simply been a demand for change, or an insistence on a particular outcome. The system has mobilised resources in such a way that they are accessible to individual schools in pursuit of their own agendas. Perhaps most significantly, the structures in Parramatta have been able to build on the commonly accepted wisdom about the role of the principal, the significance of professional development and the

interdependence of school development, appraisal and professional development, and to mesh them into a broader and more clearly articulated framework for the consideration of efforts by systems to support school effectiveness.

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